

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 15562 160123Z
ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 /019 W
-----117362 160439Z /13
R 160112Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5043

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BTIO, MX
SUBJECT: GOM AGENCY SEEKING DIRECT PURCHASING ARRANGEMENTS

1. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS THE DIRECTOR OF THE MEXICAN SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE (IMSS), ARSENIO FARRELL, HAS CALLED IN THE US, GERMAN, DUTCH AND FRENCH COMMERCIAL COUNSELORS. EACH HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT IMSS WISHES TO PURCHASE DIRECTLY FROM FOREIGN SUPPLIERS OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT RATHER THAN THROUGH LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS. THE REASONS ADDUCED WERE DECREASED COSTS, IMPROVED MAINTENANCE ASSISTANCE AND PROVISION OF SPARE PARTS. FARRELL IMPLIED TO US THAT IMSS WOULD BE PREPARED TO SHIFT ALL MEDICAL EQUIPMENT PURCHASES TO US SUPPLIERS IF DIRECT ARRANGEMENTS WERE WORKED OUT. THERE WAS APPARENTLY NO MENTION OF THIS POSSIBILITY IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER EMBASSIES.

2. WE REPLIED THAT ANY SUCH ARRANGEMENTS WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE UP TO THE COMPANIES CONCERNED AND IN MANY CASES WOULD INVOLVE CONTRACTUAL AND OTHER PROBLEMS WITH THEIR PRESENT DISTRIBUTORS. WE AGREED, HOWEVER, TO ASSIST IMSS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US SUPPLIERS IF WE WERE INFORMED WHICH ONES IMSS WAS INTERESTED IN. TO DATE WE HAVE HAD NO FURTHER WORD FROM IMSS ON THE MATTER, ALTHOUGH WE WERE PROMISED THAT SUCH A LIST WOULD BE FORTHCOMING WITHIN A FEW DAYS.

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3. THE GERMAN COUNSELOR TELLS US THAT HE IS DISINCLINED TO COOPERATE AND HE BELIEVES THE DUTCH AND FRENCH ARE STALLING BUT ALSO UNENTHUSIASTIC.

4. COMMENT: IMSS IS THE MAJOR CUSTOMER FOR MEDICAL EQUIPMENT IN MEXICO, BUYING ABOUT 1 BILLION PESOS ANNUALLY, VIRTUALLY ALL OF IT IMPORTED, SO ITS BUSINESS IS IMPORTANT.

WHILE THERE APPEARS TO BE RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF THIRD-COUNTRY SUPPLIERS TO GO ALONG WITH IMSS ON THIS, THERE IS ALWAYS THE TEMPTATION TO COOPERATE IN THE INTERESTS OF CAPTURING NEW BUSINESS. DIRECTOR FARRELL HAS A RECORD OF ERRATIC BEHAVIOR AND WE ARE UNCERTAIN HOW FAR HE INTENDS TO PRESS THIS OR WHAT THE SCOPE OF THE PRODUCTS WILL BE, IF HE DOES. THE EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW THE MATTER AND REPORT SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS. LUCEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MEXICO15562
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770336-0175
Format: TEL
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770956/aaaabutz.tel
Line Count: 70
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d7d43245-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION COME
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1246543
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOM AGENCY SEEKING DIRECT PURCHASING ARRANGEMENTS
TAGS: BTIO, MX
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d7d43245-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009